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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/773,241	01/31/2001	John C. Molander	8409	6142

27752 7590 09/22/2005

THE PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DIVISION
WINTON HILL TECHNICAL CENTER - BOX 161
6110 CENTER HILL AVENUE
CINCINNATI, OH 45224

EXAMINER

KIDWELL, MICHELE M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3761

DATE MAILED: 09/22/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/773,241

Applicant(s)

MOLANDER ET AL.

Examiner

Michele Kidwell

Art Unit

3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 June 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1 and 5-19 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1 and 5-19 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on June 24, 2005 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to

consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 1, 5 – 10, 14 and 16 – 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aledo et al. (US 4,850,988).

As to claim 1, Aledo et al. (hereinafter "Aledo") discloses a disposable article comprising a containment assembly (Figure 3 member 22) longitudinal edges, at least one elastomeric side panel carried by the containment assembly (Figure 3 members 15 and 16), and extending outwardly, the at least one elastomeric side panel including an outer periphery and an inner region having at least one discontinuity limited to the interior region (Figure 3 member 18) for dividing a tensile force applied to the at least one side panel into a waist-directing force and a leg-directing force wherein the at least one discontinuity bounded by the outer periphery (col. 3 lines 44 – 54 and col. 4 lines 10-17) wherein the at least one elastomeric side panel further includes a waist region and leg region separated thereof by the at least one discontinuity (Figure 3 member 18), the waist region is configured to transmit the waist-directing form, and the leg region is configured to transmit the leg-directing force (col. 4 lines 10-17) and wherein the waist region and leg region have an extensibility as set forth in Figure 1.

The difference between Aledo and claim 1 is the provision that the waist region has an extensibility varying from about 5g/mm to about 50 g/mm and the leg region has an extensibility varying from about 1 g/mm to about 30 g/mm,

However, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the waist and leg elasticity with specific parameters, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art.

As to claim 5, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein the waist region has a greater width than the leg region (Figure 1 and 2 where the areas 15, 19, 16 are extending further than area 13).

As to claim 6, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein at least one discontinuity is defined by at least one cut line. (Figure 2 member 18).

As to claim 7, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein at least one cut line is rectilinear (Figure 3 member 17).

As to claim 8, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein at least one cut line is disposed substantially parallel with a first lateral edge of the at least one elastomeric side panel (Figure 3 member 17 parallel with waist edge).

As to claim 9, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein at least one discontinuity includes at least one opening. (Figure 3 members 17 at end edge).

As to claim 10, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein at least one opening is defined by a substantially triangular open area or a substantially rectangular open area or a substantially trapezoidal open area (Figure 3 members 17 and 18 make up a substantially triangular open area).

As to claim 14, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein at least one cut line is curvilinear (Figure 3 member 18).

As to claims 16 and 17, Aledo discloses a disposable article wherein the waist-directing force in the waist region of the side panel extends at an angle ranging from about 0 to about 45° relative to a lateral centerline of the disposable article, and wherein the leg-directing force in the leg region of the side panel extends at an angle ranging from about 10 to about 35° relative to the lateral centerline of the disposable article; wherein the waist-directing force in the waist region of the side panel extends at an angle ranging from about 10 to about 150 relative to a lateral centerline of the disposable article, and wherein the leg-directing force in the leg region of the side panel extends at an angle ranging from about 20 to about 300 relative to the lateral centerline of the disposable article. (Figures 1, 2, and 3 members 15, 16).

With respect to claims 18 and 19, see the rejection of claim 1.

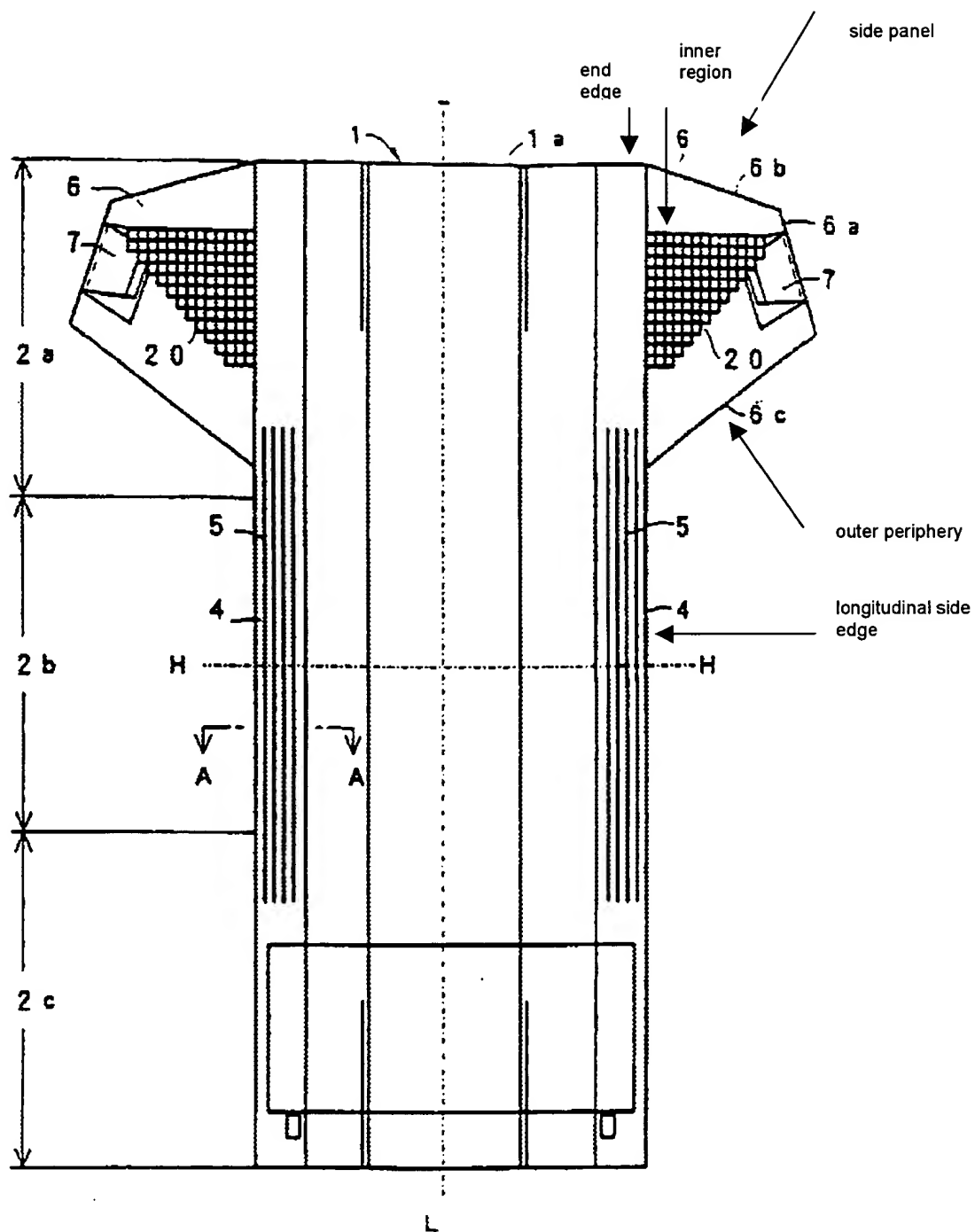
Claims 1 – 2, 6 – 7 and 9 – 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Heki et al. (US 5,906,008).

As to claim 1, Heki et al. (hereinafter “Heki”) discloses a disposable article comprising a containment assembly (Figure 1) having a first longitudinal edge and a second longitudinal edge opposed thereof, a first end edge and a second end edge opposed thereto, the first and second longitudinal edges being configured to contact the legs of the wearer, and the first and the second end edges being structured and configured to contact the waist of the wearer; and at least one elastomeric side panel

(6) carried by the containment assembly (Figure 1), and extending outwardly from the first longitudinal edge of the containment assembly adjacent the first end edge of the containment assembly, the at least one elastomeric side panel including an outer periphery and an inner region having at least one discontinuity (20) limited to the interior region for dividing a tensile force applied to the at least one side panel into a waist-directing force and a leg-directing force wherein the at least one discontinuity is bounded by the at least one elastomeric side panel [col. 10, lines 3 – 37 and in figure 1 (as shown below) and in figure 6] wherein the at least one elastomeric side panel further includes a waist region (top of article as shown in figure 1) and leg region (area generally designated by reference characters “4” and “5” in figure 1) separated thereof by the at least one discontinuity (20), the waist region is configured to transmit the waist-directing form, and the leg region is configured to transmit the leg-directing force (col. 12, line 49 to col. 13, line 5) and wherein the waist region and leg region have an extensibility as set forth in Figure 1.

The difference between Heki and claim 1 is the provision that the waist region has an extensibility varying from about 5g/mm to about 50 g/mm and the leg region has an extensibility varying from about 1 g/mm to about 30 g/mm,

However, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the waist and leg elasticity with specific parameters, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art.



As to claim 6, Heki discloses a disposable article wherein at least one discontinuity is defined by at least one cut line as set forth in col. 10, lines 17 – 20.

With reference to claim 7, Heki discloses a disposable article wherein the at least one cut line is rectilinear as set forth in figure 6.

As to claim 9, Heki discloses a disposable article wherein at least one discontinuity includes at least one opening as set forth in col. 10, lines 17 – 20.

As to claim 10, Heki discloses a disposable article wherein at least one opening is defined by a substantially triangular open area or a substantially rectangular open area or a substantially trapezoidal open area as set forth in figure 6.

With reference to claim 11, Heki discloses a disposable article wherein the at least one discontinuity is defined by a plurality of cut lines as set forth in figure 6.

With respect to claim 12, Heki discloses a disposable article wherein the plurality of cut lines includes three spaced cut lines as set forth in figure 6.

The difference between Heki and claim 13 is the provision that the cut lines are configured in a specific arrangement.

Heki teaches an article with a plurality of cut lines as shown in figure 6.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to arrange the cut lines as desired in order to produce the most effective product since it has been held that rearranging parts of an invention involves only routine skill in the art.

The difference between Heki and claim 14 is the provision that at least one cut line is curvilinear.

Heki teaches an article with a plurality of cut lines as shown in figure 6.

Absent a critical teaching and/or unexpected result, the examiner contends that the claimed curvilinear cut lines vs. the rectilinear cut lines taught by Heki is an obvious matter of design choice that does not patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art.

The difference between Heki and claim 15 is the provision that the cut lines are curvilinear.

Heki teaches an article with a plurality of cut lines disposed to define a substantially triangular array of spaced cut lines as shown in figure 6.

Absent a critical teaching and/or unexpected result, the examiner contends that the claimed curvilinear cut lines vs. the rectilinear cut lines taught by Heki is an obvious matter of design choice that does not patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed June 24, 2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

In response to the applicant's arguments that the discontinuity is limited to an inner region, the examiner contends that the entire portion shown by Aledo may be considered an inner region.

In response to the applicant's arguments regarding the term "bounded", the examiner contends that the applicant's arguments are not commensurate with the claimed language. "Bounded" – even though defining the boundaries of – does not necessarily include a border on all sides. Aledo identifies the boundaries of the slit on three sides. The term is not reflective of something being completely enclosed or surrounded as the applicant argues.

With respect to claims 16 and 17, the examiner contends that the lateral centerline may be any lateral centerline that would allow the side panel to extend at an angle meeting the claimed limitations. The article of Aledo comprises elastics in both the waist and leg region, thereby it is inherent that there would be both a waist-directing force and a leg-directing force.

In response to the applicant's arguments that the discontinuity is limited to an inner region, the examiner contends any region may be considered an inner region.

With respect to the applicant's argument that Aledo does not teach any preexisting ranges for extensibility or elasticity, the examiner disagrees.

The disclosure of elastic elements having elastic properties and extensibility of the article by Aledo in col. 2, lines 22 – 47 provides the basis for the range of extensibility and elasticity. The article obviously would have these properties based on the written disclosure and discovering the optimum value or range for these properties would involve only a level of ordinary skill in the art.

Art Unit: 3761

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michele Kidwell whose telephone number is 571-272-4935. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 5:30am - 2:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tatyana Zalukaeva can be reached on 571-272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Michele Kidwell
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3761